

## Enclosure of letter from Eliza Symonds Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, November 4, 1874

### The Transit of Venus .

The London *Academy* says:—"News has been received by telegraph of the safe arrival of the *Merope* at Christchurch, New Zealand, with the Transit of Venus party on board. The Sandwich Islands and Rodriguez expeditions have also reached their destination without any casualty. At the latter island some difficulty was experienced in landing the instruments and heavy stores, as coral reefs prevented her Majesty's ship *Shearwater* from approaching the land, but eventually the instruments were landed without damage, and hoisted by means of shears to the selected site. Since then the *Shearwater* has made a trip from Mauritius and back with forty-two chronometers, which Lord Lindsay lent for the purpose, and it is proposed to repeat this operation, so that the difference of longitude between Rodriguez and Mauritius will be determined within a fraction of a second. Mauritius has been connected with Aden by Mr. Gill by means of the same forty-two chronometers, and the longitude of the latter place will be determined with great accuracy by submarine cable, the section from Suez to Aden having been already done by Mr. Gill. A submarine cable, between Mauritius and Aden (the weak link in this chain of longitudes): will be laid down within a twelve-month, and when this is done the longitudes of the Mauritius group of stations will be determined to a tenth of a second, thus constituting them a first-rate group of Delisleian stations. The Kerguelen party have left Cape Town for Kerguelen Island after some delay caused by the breaking down of the vessel which was to have carried them; but they will have ample time to erect their observatories before December 8. While at Cape Town the Rev. Father Perry gave an interesting lecture to a large audience on the Transit of Venus. The members of the Egyptian expedition are expected to reach Alexandria by the end of this month, their preparations not requiring so much time as in the case of the other parties."

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### “ The Fashionable Narcotic .”

The London *Sanitary Record* has the following:—Chloral hydrate is the new fashionable hypnotic, the means by which balmy sleep, nature's sweet restorer, is wooed. But the brief flourish of trumpets which announced its discovery has given way to a well-established and justly-founded outcry against its abuse, and the evils which attach to its employment. More dangerous than opium, more baneful than alcohol, an utterly destructive agent, except in certain active sleepless conditions, when it should be given by medical men alone, chloral hydrate is working much irremediable mischief in our midst. I am sorry to have to record the opinion I am about to express, the more so that it is in the pages of a work intended to come before the lay public. But it must be done, even if it lead to some odium. It is but too common for some practitioners to advise a patient to do what they can discern he wishes to do. It is also a sad fact that any new line of treatment, any novel means of playing tricks with people under the misnomer of therapeutics, will meet with a ready adoption by those who either wish to be *au fait* with fashionable and new remedies, or are disinclined to give the necessary thought, individual thought, to each case, and its special indications for treatment. Consequently the rash, ill-founded, and, as it is being rapidly found, the ill-starred confidence in chloral is now being generally deplored by the observant members of the profession. Shortly after bromide of potassium was ushered into notoriety a plentiful crop of cases appeared in the medical journals telling of the consequences of its abuse, either when continued too long after being medically prescribed, or self-administered. The evil consequences of the habitual use, or rather abuse, of chloral hydrate are becoming much more vividly apparent. Its destructive action on the nerve centres, its production of a permanent condition of brain bloodlessness, and consequent imperfect function of the brain cells, are being widely recognized; and it is now established beyond all question of doubt that the adoption of chloral hydrate as a hypnotic in lieu of opium is the adoption of greater evil than the one it has replaced. That chloral, though it may be, and is, eminently useful as a hypnotic in certain cases, in its habitual or occasional use is a destructive poison, carrying with it the most baneful

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consequences, is generally admitted; and its wide-spread use as a soporific is fraught with mischevious results. The highest authorities, English and American, are now decrying its use, especially in cases of sleeplessness, associated with depression or "low spirits," with mental worry, and with brain distress. Those who unfortunately have been induced to make resort to chloral a practice have need to watch themselves carefully, and note quickly any changes they may feel, and eschew the poison as speedily as may be on the first appearance of any morbid effects.